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ABSTRACT

Vocational education for the disadvantaged and the handicapped in West Virginia at the local level needs specific teacher training programs at the college level, clear definitions and procedures for applying criteria that identify disadvantaged groups, and reorganization into integrated curriculums to avoid scheduling problems. The problems of funding, accountability, and staff development are being solved by the project method, which requires clearly measurable program goals and behavioral objectives. Identification of a specific local target population, local administrative involvement, and development of a descriptive operational model are included in this statewide approach to vocational education planning. (AG)

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

for the disadvantaged and handicapped

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Monograph Series No. 1

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FOR THE DISADVANTAGED AND HANDICAPPED

An address to the National Association of State Directors of Vocational Education, at the 64th Annual Convention of American Vocational Association, New Orleans, Louisiana on December 5, 1970

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1971

ABOUT THE AUTHOR . . . . . .

Mr. Fred W. Eberle, the Assistant State Superintendent of Schools and the State Director of Vocational Education, has been a member of the Division of Vocational Education since August 15, 1946. He began as State Teacher Trainer for Trade and Industrial Education, and then became State Supervisor of Trade and Industrial Education on October 1, 1950. He was appointed Assistant Director of the Division of Vocational Education on November 1, 1961, and served as Acting State Director from April 1, 1963, until January 1, 1964. He was appointed State Director of Vocational Education on September 29, 1964.

Before joining the Division of Vocational Education, he was a member of the faculty of West Virginia Institute of Technology, Montgomery, West Virginia. He taught in Martins Ferry High School (Ohio), and in Calhoun County High School prior to that time.

Mr. Eberle attended the Martins Ferry public schools, Glenville State College (A.B.), West Virginia Institute of Technology (B.S.), and pursued graduate study at West Virginia University and the University of Pittsburgh.

He maintains membership in many professional organizations including the American Vocational Association, the American Society of Training Directors, the American Management Association, the National Management Association, the National Education Association, the Adult Education Association of the United States, the National Council of Local Administrators of Vocational Education, the West Virginia Vocational Association and the West Virginia Education Association.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR THE DISADVANTAGED AND HANDICAPPED

There has been a great deal of discussion about vocational education during the past ten years on the question of what is the most appropriate approach in providing vocational education programs for the handicapped and disadvantaged persons. This organization has listened to outstanding vocational educators reveal their positions on the legislation mandating the inclusion of this segment of the population into ongoing state programs for vocational education. You have participated in national conferences that focused their deliberations on the objectives of educational changes to make those persons, considered by legislative definition as handicapped and/or disadvantaged, employable.

SPECIAL NEEDS -- A DILEMMA

During the 1960's, vocational educators again became involved in another situation that has been challenging and demanding. The social and economic climate was filled with elements of revolution that gave national attention to the cause of education for work. The sixties are now history, but the national educational acts are now the lifeblood of our efforts. Purpose Four of the 1963 Act caused a fuss that few have yet recovered. Special needs became a topic of daily conversation. The questions centered mostly on how-to-do-it. Then, several years later, we found that Purpose Four had two main aspects with 25% of the basic grant devoted to support for these programs. The original fuss was amplified with evidence of concern spreading everywhere.

Deliberations among vocational educators indicated that strategies for developing programs for the handicapped and disadvantaged were needed. These programs could not be imposed on the majority of established ongoing programs. Attempts to modify caused severe reactions among those serving

and those being served. Then, the proliferation of programs from other agencies supported by federal funds caused consternation among the vocational educators. The competition for the buck made the job slightly discriminatory. Just recently, HEW Secretary, Elliot L. Richardson. speaking to the Chief State School Officers, noted "there are 20 programs concerned with the disadvantaged which are managed under 15 sets of guidelines".

The Third Report of the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education gave additional emphasis to the problem of the disdavantaged and handicapped. This report said -- "give priority to programs for the disadvantaged without separating the disadvantaged from the mainstream of education."

Each state had the problem and the need for developing solutions to comply with the guidelines. The peculiarity of States can be found in their approaches to providing programs for the disadvantaged and handicapped persons. Literature contains the essentials that many States have followed. Some established special courses for these persons; an example is the work experience programs in Ohio. Others have resorted to the project approach. We are grateful for the help given to us by the vocational educators from Georgia and New York. The need for imaginative ways was never greater.

PROBLEMS -- OR OPPORTUNITIES

Now, I should like to review a few situations that we encountered in our approach to this problem. I feel that many of our local vocational education administrators are justified in defending themselves on this proposition. They said, "I simply cannot get qualified teachers to teach the course for the disadvantaged or handicapped." They say it is difficult to identify just who these disadvantaged persons

are that need a special approach or special types of education. They complain that the State office won't give them enough funds to establish special courses -- money for facilities, equipment and supplies. Then, they tell us that Special Education and Vocational Rehabilitation are involved in programs for this group. Even ESEA funds have been expended on the disadvantaged and handicapped programs.

Our State Plan has the following statement in it, and I quote: "Disadvantaged students are those students who have academic, socio-economic and other handicaps that prevent them from succeeding in regular vocational education programs designed for persons without such handicaps and wno, for that reason, require especially designed educational programs or related services. The characteristics of disadvantaged persons include the following:

A. Persons with poor educational backgrounds;

B. Persons who are semi-skilled or unskilled workers receiving less than poverty level incomes;

C. Persons from areas characterized by excessive unemployment;

D. Persons from areas characterized by excessive low income rates;

E. Persons who have been isolated from cultural, educational and employment opportunities;

F. Persons who, due to a combination of environmental, cultural, and

historical factors, lack motivation for obtaining an education or job skill; and

G. Persons who are dependent upon social services to meet their basic needs."

"Handicapped persons are those persons who are mentally retarded, hard of hearing, deaf, speech impaired, visually handicapped, seriously emotionally disturbed, crippled, or other health impaired persons who by reason of their handicapping condition cannot succeed in a regular vocational program without special educational assistance or who require a modified vocational program."

All too often, in spite of our present efforts, the students who fall into the categories listed here have been labeled an anti-intellectual, unmotivated, verbally restricted, or alienated.[1]

Now, if we really consider the characteristic which describes the disadvantaged as a person with poor educational background, one of the immediate pictures that comes to mind is that of a student who performs fairly well in our classes in auto mechanics or electricity, but when he returns to his home, he isn't able to communicate to his parents anything he has learned and is immediately "turned off" to such a degree that the school becomes an isolated experience rather than a part of what should become substantial in his vocational maturity. And, while we are looking at this, we begin to cloud our own minds with the various conceptual forms that disadvantage and deprivation may take as we try to bring it back

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[1]Mario D. Fantini and Gerald Weinstein, The Disadvantaged: Challenge to Education (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1968), p. 11.

into focus in our classroom. What, then, should become a real and clear image to us in terms of ways of approaching a specific type of problem of people who are disadvantaged, tends to cause us to turn away from the problem. Now, I have no quarrel with any director or directors who turn away from a problem because he does not understand it -- if he is honest in his own professional assessment of himself and of his staff. But, I will argue that people who set up screening devices in their own perception so as to exclude from their cognitive field the real existing problem are doing a disservice to the profession. What I am saying is that persons who are not sensitive to the particular characteristics and needs of students described as disadvantaged may simply be sticking-their-heads-in-the-sand like an ostrich hoping that the problem will go away until they retire or change jobs, and thus exhibit professional dishonesty.

NOW -- IS THE TIME

Now, the time is far passed when we can be fuzzy in our thinking and slipshod in our methods for providing for the target population mandated in our '68 Amendments and training appropriate to them. Now, no one would suggest that across this entire nation we should have absolutes in terms of the criteria for our identifying the disadvantaged, but we do have methods of describing the disadvantaged that will be appropriate to each of the populations in our several states and regions, and it is our responsibility to make sure that these criteria are not only established but that instruments are developed that will provide objective, reliable, and valid data for every student whom vocational education should be provided and at the levels at which it should be made available for each person within the target populations.

And, now, as we look back at the seven criteria which I described as characteristic of disadvantaged persons, I will not begin to try to tell you the specifics of either of these criteria that should become visible in the procedures and methods which you use in your particular State, but I would strongly suggest that the individual States' responsibilities do include clear definitions and clear procedures for applying such criteria to the populations within our responsibility.

Now, when I hear the local directors talking about their inability to reschedule classes so as to provide programs for the disadvantaged, then, I would simply have to raise a question here which we have spoken to and must continue to speak to, and that is whether or not these shall be separated as special groups rather than being integrated into other classes. For years we have claimed to have individualized instruction in much of our vocational education, but at this point, I am not really clear as to the definitions of individualized instruction which we really are implementing in our vocational classes, and even if we are, there is considerable question as to whether or not within a given class that the individualized instruction is really individualized to the point that it does provide for coping on the part of the student with learning in the given content area, or whether our teachers, because of their cognitive screening devices, use the same general technique with all students even if the training is individualized.

Be sure that you know that I am not suggesting, necessarily, that you have separate classes, but there are methods that we can use that would help us to provide for these as separate groups or as integrated groups, the least of which is nongrading, in which we will set up by ability level the classes to provide for the different groups we have according

to the disadvantaged criteria that we have identified in the particular group. In spite of my not wishing to create an argument on the scheduling problems that local directors have identified, I believe it is the director's responsibility to find some means to the end of providing classes in some manner regardless of what the scheduling problems are.

Now, I have heard the local directors discuss their ability to provide classes for the disadvantaged -- that they have no teachers who are trained to teach the disadvantaged, and at this point I must admit that this is a major problem in West Virginia; and, according to my observation across the country, is somewhat of a problem in other states. Let me ask how many of you have within your teacher-training programs at your colleges and universities courses within the vocational teacher education curriculum that speaks directly to the issue of teaching the disadvantaged.

Now, I am aware that in some states, including our own, that special institutes have been or are being held to train teachers on a short-term basis for teaching disadvantaged students. For this I commend the people who have been responsible and have provided such training. But, over a long pull, this will not necessarily insure the numbers and kinds of teachers we need for the tremendous job that is facing us. It would seem to me that it is essential for us in our programs, in the content area in the graduate level, to provide in home economics, agriculture, business and office occupations, and other areas specific training for students who are planning to become teachers in vocational education. For that matter, how many of you can honestly report that your teacher training institutions have even provided time for student teachers at the undergraduate level to take courses

in the specific areas of special education even though these areas are provided at the university. I feel confident that for the most part your answers will be negative to this, with the excuse given that the curriculum is already so full that they do not have time to include anything new that may be appropriate for what they will find on the new job. Now, I do not wish to be too critical, for few of our institutions of higher learning actually have a specific department for special education providing those courses that might be appropriate. I suppose my gripe there is that where they do have them, they are often not taken advantage of. Only this year have we been able to get approval and establish programs at Marshall University to provide for a comprehensive graduate program which includes specific training for teaching the disadvantaged and the handicapped. And these are, we are glad to say, in conjunction with the Special Education Department at the University.

By this time you can see that another concern of local directors for not having programs for the disadvantaged -- is that there is no room for new programs -- has pretty well answered itself if we integrate the disadvantaged in with the so-called advantaged students. This is simply to say that it may not require new space or new equipment in the overall revision of the program. It perhaps will come closer to becoming a reorganization and reidentification of certain elements within the program.

ONE APPROACH -- THE PROJECT METHOD

Well, at this stage, in looking at the complexity of the program we are tempted to do, as so many of our directors have done, simply to shelve

the dilemma. In addition to all the other things that we have to do in the development, organization, and implementation of programs, taking on a new program for this extreme complication of student identification and the validity of such programs, it is certainly a temptation to say "heck with it!" But, again, this would be professionally dishonest, and so we have set about on a new course in West Virginia to handle the problems related to providing programs for the disadvantaged, as perhaps you have, for Section 102.b funds. The method we have chosen for providing the programs as required under the '68 Amendments is the "project" method. We debated the issues at length, trying to come up with a satisfactory solution to the problem of funding, the problems of accountability, and to the problems of developing staff trained to teach the disadvantaged. For the time being, we have chosen the project method because it contains seven or more characteristics which appear to be sound in terms of the problems in any kind of vocational program in which accountability is a factor.

The first reason we chose for moving to the project method for the programs is that it requires a clear identification of the population through the objective measures if funding is to be made available.

Secondly, the project method requires that the objectives of such a program be spelled out clearly in measurable, behavioral terms.

Third, the project method requires a defined and described process to reach these objectives, and we are insisting here that this include supervised practice and supervised work experience.

The fourth reason for moving to the project method is that it requires a clear operational model. We are convinced at this point that the development of visual models provides the best way of communicating clearly the concepts of any type of program. We are to the point of requiring that all of the project proposals have a described operational model.

The fifth reason we chose the project method is that it puts the burden of obtaining staff directly on the local school administrative unit. If different populations required different treatment then the local unit is in the best position to identify for a specific population the training needed by staff members to cope with teaching them.

Another reason we moved to the project method was accountability. This is -- the particular program must have identified the levels at which students come into the program so that at the end of the given time, such as a year, there will be some basis on which to say that students did achieve levels of learning in terms of work experience, and so forth, during that time.

The seventh reason we moved to the project method was that it provides a clear funding accountability. This is in deference, of course, to providing a sum of money to an administrative unit for "so many" classes. We feel it is essential that the funding be established on a basis that accounts by numbers of students and specific students for the expenditures of funds. Of course, this must be set up on a variable basis, depending upon the numbers and the kinds of disadvantaged students that we are able to identify in any given fiscal year.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR DISADVANTAGED AND HANDICAPPED -- A CALL TO ACTION

We have now talked about the status of the art, particularly in reference to the State of West Virginia; that is, the status of the art in vocational education for the disadvantaged. As we conclude this particular discussion, I think it is worthy of our time to consider what, during the last two or so decades, because of economic, political or social factors, has come to the forefront in world conditions such as the under development of human beings in other parts of the world, that American people have become aware of the disparities between groups of people that exist everywhere on the globe and particularly in our own country. This is not to say that we were not aware of these before the last two decades, but that the focus of our economic, political and social development in recent years have pointed directly to the problems. Now, faced with these problems as a public problem, of course, the public has looked for ways to shed the responsibility or at least looked for scapegoats; and since we have been at least able to avoid some of the spotlight, attention has been turned to us as professional educators to bear the blame for the present situation. Of course, this is not without justification. Granted, the school has not created the conditions to make for social disadvantage and social deprivation; it is quite clear that neither have we provided education that has done a great deal to improve the conditions of these people. This is in spite of the fact that we have in our education and in our technology made tremendous gains and have had considerable resources during the first half of the twentieth century. And, even now,

as we look at it, we recognize that we are provided a great deal more resources in vocational education to do the job.[2]

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[2] Edmund W. Gordon and Doxey A. Wilkerson, Compensatory Education for the Disadvantaged (Princeton, New Jersey: College Entrance Examination Board, 1966), p. 1.